

# Council members call for Confederate monument to be covered

The monument sits outside the Howard County Circuit Court building, and bears the names of 92 Confederate soldiers from Howard County. (Courtesy photo)



**Kate Magill** **Contact Reporter** Howard County Times

As county officials continue to consider whether to remove a Confederate monument from the grounds of the county's Circuit Court building, County Council members Calvin Ball and Jen Terrasa released a joint statement Friday calling for the monument to be covered up until it can be moved.

"From our perspective, if we couldn't remove the monument immediately, there is no reason we can't at the very least cover it up while we work through whatever process some believe we need to follow," the statement reads.

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Ball and Terrasa said in the statement that the monument should be placed in a museum to put it in proper context and affirm "that it belongs in the past."

"To continue to have this symbol of white supremacy on our courthouse grounds gives it current credibility," the two said in the statement. "With Charlottesville and other communities across the country taking quick and decisive action to remove confederate monuments, our delay is particularly troublesome."

The discussion surrounding the monument comes in the wake of a weekend of violence in Charlottesville, Va., after a white supremacist rally erupted in deadly violence as rally participants attacked counter protesters who were there in opposition to the rally.

Council Chairman Jon Weinstein said that the monument is likely to be moved to the Howard County Historical Society Museum nearby.

"We need to put that sort of history into context and understand it but not revere it," Weinstein said. "It is a monument, it is a representation of the fact that people in Ellicott City served in the Confederate army. We don't have to be proud of that fact, but it is a fact."

The monument was originally dedicated in 1948, and bears the names of 92 Confederate soldiers from Howard County.

County Executive Allan Kittleman said that the county will need to locate and speak with the owners of the monument, as well as the community, before making a decision about its fate. He said no timeline has been set for that process.

Kittleman would not confirm that the historical society museum was the top choice for where to place the monument, but said that they are "looking at all the different options." Kittleman said the county would need to work through the legal process of how to potentially move the monument, which was "not something that was going to happen overnight."

"When you're in office you have to make sure everything's being done appropriately," Kittleman said. "It's better to make sure everything's right before you start."

Councilman Calvin Ball said that while he wished to see the monument moved immediately, conversations need to happen with stakeholders in the community about what the best solution is.

"The environment that we create going towards the halls of justice should be one of freedom, equality and fairness," Ball said. "And monuments to the Confederacy do not convey that."

Carla Gates, a member of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbia's [Black Lives Matter](#) group, said she believes the monument needs to be moved to a location where it can be preserved in the proper context.

"It's important to put history where it belongs," Gates said. "I do think we have to hold onto the history because if we forget the history then we don't understand what happened in Charlottesville."

Its current location in front of the courthouse is not appropriate, she said, as it undermines what the values of equality the justice system should stand for.

"I just don't think it's appropriate in front of a courthouse that's supposed to represent equal access to justice for everybody. To me having that placard in that location is the problem," Gates said. "You're saying that black people aren't equal. It's like a subtle insult."

Gates said the Black Lives Matter group does not have any specific actions planned in regards to the monument, but will continue to hold vigils every second Sunday of the month.

The monument is commemorated annually at its location by the Maryland division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, the oldest hereditary organization for male descendants of Confederate soldiers. The commemoration includes a parade, taps, speakers and often a rifle salute, Maryland Division Commander Terry Klima said.

Klima said that given the recent events in Charlottesville and heightened political tensions, the group's leadership will likely discuss the event's date, time and location. He declined to confirm when the event would normally be held, saying only that it is usually "relatively soon," in the next couple of months.

The group likes the monument where it is, Klima said.

He said he's concerned by the politicization the violence in Charlottesville has brought to the monument, and does not feel the two issues are connected.

"Personally I would like to just defer this discussion until passions subside," Klima said. "I don't see what the relationship is between the events in Charlottesville and Ellicott City."

Howard County Historical Society Museum Executive Director Shawn Gladden said that if offered the monument for the museum, the group would accept it. Gladden said that the monument fits within the context of the society's mission to collect and preserve Howard County's history.

The museum unveiled a Civil War exhibit last week that the monument would fit well with, Gladden said. However, due to its weight and size, the monument would not be kept inside the museum, but would instead be housed somewhere on the museum's grounds.

Information would be included with the monument to explain its history and its context within the museum, according to Gladden. It would join other Confederate artifacts the museum already holds, including Confederate money and weapons.

"There's a lot of ugly history out there, but historical societies and museums don't just collect happy history," Gladden said. "We collect all of history."

Gladden said that he was initially approached by **Weinstein** about the potential for the museum to house the monument last year and again in March. He said one of the obstacles slowing down the process of potentially moving the monument is that the county does not know who owns it. The historical society is now working with the county to determine the ownership, Gladden said.

Kittleman and the council released a joint statement Monday afternoon condemning the bigotry and violence displayed by white supremacists at the rally in Charlottesville, calling the rally "vile and reprehensible."

"We stand united today, as the Howard County executive and members of the Howard County Council, to denounce these horrific acts of white supremacy and terror," the statement read. "We pledge to work together to find peaceful and unifying solutions to issues facing our community."

Hundreds gathered in Columbia on Sunday at the Black Lives Matter August vigil, which took on new significance following the violence in Charlottesville. The Howard County [NAACP](#) sponsored the event, and county officials, including Ball, spoke at the event.

"I was just overjoyed when I saw not only how many people came but just the diversity from people of all walks of life standing together saying that we stand with those fighting against intolerance and hate, and we will not cower in the corner when white supremacy rears its ugly head," Ball.

NAACP Chapter President Willie Flowers said he was impressed by the turnout of Sunday's event, particularly since organizers did not start putting the word out about the demonstration until the night before. The goal of the demonstration was to "maximize a positive response" to the events in Charlottesville that included "unity, love and progressive thoughts and people," Flowers said.

"We wanted to respond to the type of energy happening in Charlottesville," he said. "I have children and I didn't want them to think that was normal."

The chapter is working to plan other demonstrations and events in the coming weeks, including training in basic grassroots organizing on Sept. 9, Flowers said.

Kittleman said while he was not able to attend the demonstration Sunday in Columbia, he had been in touch with Flowers that day to offer his support. Kittleman's father, Bob Kittleman, was a civil rights activist throughout his life, and was the first white person to join the county's NAACP chapter, as well as the only white person to ever have served as its president.

"More than anything else the people of Howard County stand firmly with the people of Charlottesville," Kittleman said.

Weinstein was also in attendance Sunday, and said that it was a great show of support for both the Black Lives Matter movement and of peace in Howard County. Weinstein's son, Zach, a progressive organizer in the Washington, D.C., area attended the counter-protest in Charlottesville but was unharmed.

Zach Weinstein said he decided to go to Charlottesville to stand in solidarity and support those already working on the ground there.

"I wanted to show up and to some extent use the fact that I am a white person and under less threat from these white supremacists to stand between these folks who are most at risk and use myself as a shield as much as possible to protect folks," Weinstein said.

Zack Weinstein said he disagrees with Howard County residents who believe the events in Charlottesville don't affect them.